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Lawmakers Investigate How COVID Orthodoxy Dissenters Were Treated at FDA + More

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By The Defender Staff

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Big Brother NewsWatch

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Lawmakers Investigate How COVID Orthodoxy Dissenters Were Treated at FDA

The Center Square reported:

> U.S. House Republicans launched an investigation Wednesday into how scientists at the Food and Drug Administration who disagreed with COVID-19 guidance were treated. Federal watchdogs have recently released information showing that details around how experts in the Biden administration who disagree with things like COVID guidance are treated, and how their dissent is handled or considered, are unclear.
>
> Republican leadership on the Energy and Commerce Committee sent a letter to FDA Commissioner Robert Califf requesting details on those questions. In their letter, the lawmakers want more clear and transparent documentation on how scientific dissenters and their thoughts are handled within the FDA.
>
> Ongoing research and published evidence since the COVID pandemic began have brought into question the safety and efficacy of the COVID vaccine. Lockdown policy in particular has come under scrutiny as evidence suggests it came at a high economic cost with little slowing of the pandemic.
>
> Other official COVID-related guidance has been almost entirely debunked. As The Center Square previously reported, a report from the George Mason University's Mercatus Center that evaluated Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, DC, showed that city-wide vaccine mandates did nothing to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Top U.S. Healthcare Firm Reveals Data Breach Affected Millions of Patients

TechRadar reported:

> Healthcare tech firm HealthEC has confirmed it suffered a data breach in the summer of 2023 during which it lost sensitive data belonging to 4.5 million people, customers of its clients.
>
> In a report filed with Maine's Attorney General's office, the company said the attack happened between July 14 and July 23 last year, and that hackers stole names and other personal identifiers.
>
> However, BleepingComputer reports that the attackers stole people's names, postal addresses, birth dates, Social Security Numbers, Taxpayer Identification Numbers, medical record numbers, medical information (diagnosis, diagnosis code, mental/physical condition, prescription information, and provider's name and location), health insurance information (beneficiary number, subscriber number, Medicaid/Medicare identification), and billing and claims information (patient account number, patient identification number, and treatment cost information), citing a notification published by a victim.
>
> As the data was stolen from HealthEC's clients, multiple firms were affected by the incident. Some of the firms listed in the notice are Corewell Health, HonorHealth, Beaumont ACO, State of Tennessee — Division of TennCare, the University Medical Center of Princeton Physicians' Organization, and the Alliance for Integrated Care of New York.

Mask Mandates Return at Some U.S. Hospitals as COVID, Flu Jump

Reuters reported:

> Hospitals in at least four U.S. states have reinstated mask mandates amid a rise in cases of COVID, seasonal flu and other respiratory illness.
>
> Healthcare facilities in New York, California, Illinois and Massachusetts have made masks mandatory among patients and providers.
>
> New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan told WABC TV on Wednesday that mask mandates had resumed at all 11 of the city's public hospitals, 30 health centers and five long-term care facilities.

'A Real Achilles' Heel': Medical Devices Could Be Hacked Next, Officials Fear

Axios reported:

> Amid growing cybersecurity threats to healthcare facilities, federal officials and health systems are turning their attention to potential vulnerabilities hiding in plain sight in hospital rooms, imaging centers and even patients' homes: medical devices.
>
> Why it matters: Hackers have especially targeted health systems for their valuable troves of patient data and in some cases have temporarily knocked systems offline, disrupting patient care. But there are also a range of medical devices — such as MRIs, ventilators and pacemakers — that are potential targets, particularly when it comes to aging devices with outdated software.
>
> Driving the news: A government watchdog late last month called for the Food and Drug Administration, which oversees medical devices, and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to improve coordination on cybersecurity of medical devices — a recommendation both agencies agreed with.
>
> The big picture: While the threat to devices has so far been largely theoretical, Toby Gouker, an executive at privacy and security firm First Health Advisory, predicted they will increasingly become the targets as health systems get better at shutting down hackers' attempts to seize health records.

TikTok Aims to Grow Its TikTok Shop U.S. Business Tenfold to $17.5 Billion in 2024, Report Claims

TechCrunch reported:

> TikTok is looking to grow the size of its TikTok Shop U.S. business tenfold to as much as $17.5 billion this year, according to a new report from Bloomberg. The report indicates that the 2024 merchandise volume goal was recently discussed internally within the company, and could be amended as the year progresses.
>
> With this goal, TikTok would not only be looking to take on Amazon but also fellow Chinese-owned companies Temu and Shein, both of which have become popular in the U.S. But TikTok has something the other two companies don't, which is an extremely popular social media network that could leverage viral videos to reach buyers.
>
> As Bloomberg previously reported, TikTok was on track to amass around $20 billion in global gross merchandise value last year. A majority of the sales were seen in Southeast Asia. TikTok is now interested in bringing that success to the U.S. In addition, the report says the company is planning to launch TikTok Shop in Latin America in the coming months.

Why Is TikTok Parent ByteDance Moving Into Biology, Chemistry and Drug Discovery?

Forbes reported:

> ByteDance, the Chinese parent company of TikTok, appears to be ramping up work in fields well beyond the bounds of social media: Biology, chemistry, natural sciences and pharmaceuticals.
>
> The Beijing-based tech giant is recruiting American talent in computational biology, quantum chemistry, molecular dynamics and physics for its "AI for Drug Design" and "AI for Science" teams, according to LinkedIn posts reviewed by Forbes. ByteDance appears to be hiring for at least 17 of these positions across New York, California and Washington state—taking a swing at local rivals like Meta, Google and Amazon, where similar work is already underway. (Others leading these efforts at ByteDance appear to be based in Chicago, Boston and Beijing, according to LinkedIn.)
>
> Staffers across the board will "co-create a future" with ByteDance, the listings say. What, exactly, that future is to be isn't clear. It is also unclear how drug discovery or development, and other science-focused efforts, fit into ByteDance's sprawling repertoire of social media sensations like TikTok and its Chinese counterpart Douyin.
>
> ByteDance declined to comment on what its objectives are, how large the AI for Drug Design and Science teams are today and who it may have already hired. But a head of AI for drug design and science started at the company this past summer, per LinkedIn — an expert who is also running UCLA's General Artificial Intelligence Lab — and the team has already released research on protein design and drug design, and an open-source

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Google Just Disabled Cookies for 30 Million Chrome Users. Here's How to Tell If You're One of Them.

Gizmodo reported:

> Today marks the first of many upcoming moments of silence in Google's years-long plan to kill cookies. As of this morning, the Chrome web browser disabled cookies for 1% of its users, about 30 million people. By the end of the year, cookies will be gone in Chrome forever — sort of.
>
> For privacy advocates, cookies are the original sin of the internet. Throughout most of the web's history, cookies were one of the primary ways that tech companies tracked your behavior online. For targeted ads and many other kinds of tracking, websites rely on cookies made by other companies (such as Google).
>
> These are known as "third-party cookies," and they're built into the internet's infrastructure. They're everywhere. If you visited Gizmodo without an ad blocker or some other kind of tracking protection, we might have given you some cookies ourselves. Sorry.
>
> Back in 2019, years of bad news about Google, Facebook, and other tech companies' privacy malpractices got so loud that Silicon Valley had to address it. Google, which makes the vast majority of its money tracking you and showing you ads online, announced that it was embarking on a project to get rid of third-party cookies in Chrome. Something like 60% of internet users are on Chrome, so Google getting rid of the technology will essentially kill cookies forever.

Your Health Information Was Hacked. What Now?

The New York Times via The Seattle Times reported:

> Your health data is exceptionally valuable — and exceptionally vulnerable. That has been made clear in a string of recent breaches that have exposed sensitive medical information, including a hack at the genetic testing company 23andMe; a ransomware attack in November that affected emergency rooms and delayed medical procedures at hospitals in several states; and a cyberattack on a medical transcription company that stole the health data of 9 million people.
>
> Such large breaches are increasingly common: In the first 10 months of 2023, more than 88 million individuals — one-fourth of Americans — had their medical data exposed, according to the Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS.
>
> And that number does not include episodes involving companies that may have access to your health data but that aren't governed by the patient privacy law known as HIPAA, which requires breaches to be reported to the federal government.
>
> For people whose information is leaked, a breach can violate patient privacy and put them at risk of identity theft, insurance fraud or discrimination if, for example, their treatment for a stigmatized condition such as addiction or AIDS is made public, said Dr. Eduardo Iturrate, health information technology safety officer and senior director for enterprise data and analytics at NYU Langone Health.

Elon Musk's SpaceX Launches First Phone Service Satellites

The Guardian reported:

> SpaceX launched a rocket on Tuesday carrying the first set of Starlink satellites that can beam signals directly to smartphones from space.
>
> Elon Musk's space business struck a deal in August 2022 with wireless carriers to provide phone users in "dead zones" with network access via its Starlink satellites.
>
> One of the carriers, T-Mobile US, confirmed that the satellites, carried on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, were in low-Earth orbit this morning.
>
> SpaceX plans to "rapidly" scale up the project, according to Sara Spangelo, senior director of satellite engineering at SpaceX. "The launch of these first direct-to-cell satellites is an exciting milestone for SpaceX to demonstrate our technology," she said.

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